

## Chapter 17

\*Molly\*

I wake and find the other side of the bed empty, confusing me. I sit up, looking around and realize that the baby monitor is turned off. In a panic, I jump up and rush to the twins room, sure that they're awake and crying their hearts out. The nanny doesn't usually get up with them at night, knowing that I prefer to should they need anything.

I open the door to find my mate in the rocking chair that really is far too small for him, leaning back as best he can with his feet propped up on the ottoman. He's sound asleep with a sleeping Cora on his chest. There was never a moment where I thought he wouldn't be a good father, but I never expected to find THIS.

I look at the other crib in the room and find Andrew sitting up in his bed, playing with a teething toy that was accidentally left in there.

"Hey, handsome," I whisper to him, reaching in to lift him out. "Happy birthday," I tell him, placing a kiss on his sweet baby head and take him to the changing table. A quick diaper change and my favorite little guy and I head to the kitchen to make a special birthday breakfast.

I place him in his highchair and hand him some little puffs on his tray and turn on some music. Andrew absolutely loves music. He does his sweet little baby dance and happily eats the offered snack as I grab what I need from the pantry, moving to get the rest from the refrigerator.

"Mama!" he exclaims, causing me to smile, but when I turn I see it's only because he's finished all of his snacks and wants more.

I shake more out onto his tray and get to work, making sausage and pancakes for the kids' very first birthday breakfast. I'm dancing and humming along to the music as I flip pancakes when I smell Seth walking in with Cora.

"Good morning," he rasps with a smile, wrapping his arm around me and placing a kiss on my neck as I feel his smile on my neck. He releases me to place Cora in her own seat, handing her a pile of her own snacks to enjoy while I cook.

He wraps his arms around me from behind, gently resting his chin on the top of my head, but leaving me enough room to flip the pancakes. "I love that you care enough to do this for them."

"It's their first birthday, Seth," I say with a giggle. "Of course I'm making their breakfast."

"And their cakes, and planning a party, and refusing to let anyone else join us on the actual day. It's sweet, Love."

I shake my head at him, wiggling out of his arms to get the canister I need out of the pantry. I pour some syrup, vanilla and cream into it, twisting the lid on and screwing the gas onto it.

"Was that sugar?" he asks with a chuckle while trying to appear appalled.

"It's their birthday," I tell him, rolling my eyes. "Of course they can have sugar today. But it really doesn't have that much. The cakes though..."

"What can I do to help you, Love?" he asks.

And that's how I end up making a second batch of pancakes. The man is determined to help, but he's useless in the kitchen and it takes him half a batch to figure out when to flip the pancakes. Thankfully, I'm wise enough to keep him away from the sausage.

"Sorry," he mutters, clearly embarrassed, and I can't help but giggle.

"I'm proud of you," I tell him, wrapping my arm around his bicep and resting my head on his strong arm. "You're learning something new. The kids are content with their puffs. There's nothing to be sorry for. Hey! That one looks great!"

He turns to me, a breathtaking smile on his face, so much like the first time I met him and he smiled at me when he first took my hand. It turns my insides as funny now as it did then and I can't help but melt into him just a little more. Things have been crazy since taking the throne. We're always busy with work or the kids... or making more kids. It's nice to have a day together that's just so damn normal.

"No work today," he says and I nod in agreement. "No talking about it. No thinking about it. It's just us and the kids, for one day."

"That sounds perfect," I tell him with a smile.

In a few more days, all our families will descend on the palace for a birthday celebration with family. Our security had suggested not doing it on the actual day to throw any chance of suspicion, and we've only let immediate family know. I don't think there's anything to worry about, but I do love how it's given us today alone.

We plate the food and take a seat at the table, each of us taking on a kid to help eat. Cora tastes the whipped cream and all but dives face-first into it, fussing for more.

"Perhaps she's more like you that we realize," I tell Seth with a giggle.

He rolls his eyes at me, reaching across and wiping some of his own on my nose. "Funny coming from their mother who left the safety of the pack to the rogue lands."

"That's fair," I say, smiling at Andrew as he carefully licks the treat off his finger, cautiously placing it back for more. "I don't know where this one gets his thoughtful manners from."

"My mom," Seth says with a shrug. "It has to be genetic."